

Excerpts from Remarks by George Bush, Director of Central Intelligence, before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 15, 1976

In a recent policy statement, I said that it is the Central Intelligence Agency's policy not to divulge the names of cooperating Americans. In this regard, CIA will not make public, now or in the future, the names of any cooperating journalists.

Certainly you, as American newspaper editors, know better than almost any group the importance of protecting sources of information. Revealing our sources not only could deny our government the information it must have to formulate effective foreign policy, but also could result quite literally in a life or death situation for the sources.

There is much information that the intelligence community can and should share with the public. Under the new Executive Order I have been charged by the President with working on the problems of declassification and overclassification, and I take that charge seriously. Indeed, we have a high-level community-wide committee at work trying to come up with meaningful ways to reduce the absurd overclassification that exists.

But intelligence cannot be conducted entirely in the open. Some secrets are essential. Intelligence sources -- just as news sources -- must be protected, and I intend to see that they are.

The argument was made that because CIA was known in the past to have used some U.S. journalists on a paid basis that caused a cloud to hang over the entire journalistic profession. The air has now been cleared by the Agency's clearly announced policy that it will not enter into any paid or contractual relationships with journalists accredited by any U.S. news service, newspaper, periodical, radio or television network or station. I must emphasize, however, that I do not think any citizen -- be he journalist, businessman, student, or any one else -- should be told that he cannot voluntarily provide information to or cooperate with the CIA or any other Agency of the government.